



## **Josh Gibson and the Quick Home Run**

It has been many years since Josh Gibson last played in a baseball game. Fans who saw him play say that no one could hit a baseball harder or farther than Josh Gibson. People still tell stories about Gibson the Great. Sometimes it is hard to tell where the truth ends and the legend begins.

The following story certainly is not true. Still, it will give you an idea of the awe<sup>1</sup> felt by those who watched Josh Gibson play.

According to the tale, Gibson's team was playing one day in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Gibson was at bat. He hit a ball that just seemed to keep rising in the sky. Everyone in the park looked up. They waited for the ball to come down but it never did. Five minutes later the umpires finally decided to give Gibson a home run.



The story doesn't end there. The next day Gibson's team was playing in Philadelphia more than 250 miles away. A baseball suddenly fell from the sky. The center fielder reached out and caught it.

The umpire hurried over to Gibson. "You're out!" he exclaimed, pointing at Josh. "Yesterday, in Pittsburgh!"

Of course, this never really happened. But the story demonstrates how people felt about Josh Gibson.

Here is a story that really did take place. Once in a game in Indianapolis, the pitcher threw a very slow pitch to Gibson. Gibson began to swing too early, and his left hand flew off the bat. Somehow Gibson was able to hit the ball and soon it was soaring high over the outfield fence. The pitcher shook his head as Gibson trotted around the bases. Gibson was so strong that he had hit a home run holding the bat with only one hand!

Gibson's home runs were called "quick" home runs. This is because they traveled so quickly that they seemed to go out of the park before outfielders had enough time to turn around.

<sup>1</sup>**awe:** amazement and respect

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5**  
**LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form A**

For example, there was the home run Gibson hit in a game played in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The ball went over the fence. It sailed across the street. Finally, it flew over the wall of a prison across from the ballpark. The ball landed near a surprised group of prisoners in the prison yard.

The great home run hitter Babe Ruth once hit a ball that went 550 feet. That was Ruth's longest home run. But many of Josh Gibson's home runs went more than 500 feet. One home run at Wrigley Field in Chicago might have gone 700 feet if it had not hit the scoreboard clock.

Gibson played baseball from 1930 to 1946. During that time he hit more than 1,000 home runs. He was one of the greatest home run hitters of his time, in fact, of all time. But Josh Gibson never played in the major leagues.

Gibson never played there because he was an African American, and the unwritten rule of his time prevented African Americans from playing in the major leagues. Gibson spent his years playing for teams such as the Homestead Grays, in what were known as the Negro Leagues.

Gibson was one of the most famous stars of the Negro Leagues. In 1943 he was paid \$1,500 a month, a huge amount of money then, to play for the Pittsburgh Crawfords. How well did Gibson do? He led the league in hitting with a .526 average. This means that he got a hit more than half the times he came to bat!

On January 20, 1947, Gibson suddenly got sick and he died soon after. He was only 35 years old. Just a few months later, Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was the first African American to challenge major league baseball's "color line." Once Jackie Robinson began playing in the major leagues, baseball changed forever. Today, anyone who has enough talent can play in the major leagues.

Josh Gibson was good enough, but never got the chance to prove it. Still, he is considered one of the greatest baseball players of all times. In 1972, 25 years after his death, Gibson was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame. It is the highest honor any baseball player can receive. If you go to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, you can see a uniform that Gibson wore when he played baseball.

Yes, Josh Gibson is remembered in baseball's Hall of Fame. But he is remembered in other ways too. He will probably live on in the stories people tell, tales about Gibson the Great, the man who hit 1,000 of the quickest home runs ever seen.

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5**  
**LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form A**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the passage “Josh Gibson and the Quick Home Run”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is the MAIN reason Josh Gibson is remembered in baseball’s Hall of Fame?
  - A. He was able to hit “quick” home runs.
  - B. He hit many home runs farther than Babe Ruth.
  - C. He was one of the greatest home run hitters of his time.
  - D. He was the first African-American to play in the major leagues.
  
2. Gibson never played in the major leagues because
  - A. he was not talented enough.
  - B. there was an age limit for players.
  - C. his salary was higher in the Negro Leagues.
  - D. rules prevented African-Americans from playing.
  
3. If Gibson had not died suddenly in 1947, what might have happened?
  - A. He might have become famous.
  - B. He might not have been elected to the Hall of Fame.
  - C. He might not have been good enough for the major leagues.
  - D. He might have played in the major leagues with Jackie Robinson.
  
4. In 1947 baseball changed forever because
  - A. Gibson was elected into baseball’s Hall of Fame.
  - B. Babe Ruth hit a ball that traveled 550 feet; his longest home run.
  - C. Jackie Robinson successfully challenged the major leagues “color line”.
  - D. Gibson got the chance to prove he was good enough for major league baseball.
  
5. What happened to make Gibson a baseball star?
  - A. He led the league in hitting.
  - B. He challenged baseball’s “color lines”.
  - C. He earned a huge amount of money.
  - D. He hit more than 1,000 home runs.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5</b><br/><b>LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form A</b></p> |
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**Answer Key – Josh Gibson**

LA.E.2.2.1: The student identifies cause-and-effect relationships, stated or implied, in literary text or informational text.

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  - B. He hit many home runs farther than Babe Ruth.
  - C. **He was one of the greatest home run hitters of his time.**
  - D. He was the first African-American to play in the major leagues.
  
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